[](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/23/Darling_Lachlan_Murrumbidgee_Murray_Rivers.png)

**The Murray Darling River**

Without water used from the rivers of the Murray Darling Basin, Australia would be a very different country. Australia relies on the Murray-Darling Basin to produce a large part of the countries’ food supply. There are 6 major pipelines which transport and pump water from the river. The water is used for the following things:

* Watering of plants (such as cotton and rice) wheat crops and soil
* Supplies to homes, farms and businesses
* Drinking water for animals and humans
* Outdoor activities such as swimming and fishing
* Making Electricity

 

**Problems in the Murray Darling River**

I will now talk about some of the problems the Murray Darling River is facing and the solutions the Australian Government has made to manage these problems.

**SALINITY** – the amount of salt in the Murray Darling River is 3 times higher than normal sea or ocean water. Water can impact on crops that are watered from the river and this leads to less fruit and vegetables that the farmers grow, less drinking water for everyone to use and it is harder for fish to survive. The land and soil is also damaged as it contains too much salt and less trees grow. With less trees, birds have no shelter and cannot live along the river. The easiest way to reduce the amount of salt in the water is to plant more native trees, shrubs and grasses. Native trees have a much deeper root system than normal plants. The native trees suck up the groundwater before it reaches the salt.

 

**DROUGHT AND WATER USE**– The Murray Darling Basin has reached very low levels of water as we are facing the worst drought in a thousand years. This is why we need to be careful with the amount of water we are using at home and on farms and control the water levels. **Locks and weirs** have been built to help control the flow and water levels of the Murray Darling River and provide a good supply of water for towns and farms. **The Cap** is another idea by the Australian Government as it limits the amount of water allowed to be taken out of the Murray Darling Basin and used.



**A Lock and Weir on Murray Darling River**

**WILLOW TREES** – Willow trees were not part of the environment but planted along the Murray Darling River in 1860 by people arriving in Australia. Today, the Willow Tree has become a pest (or weed) as it grows far too quickly. Even broken branches and twigs can grow into very large new trees. The Willow Tree casts heavy shade which does not allow light to other plants on the ground. The leaves also fall into the River which stop the water from flowing freely and this makes **blue-green algae** grow in the River. It is very difficult to remove all the Willow Trees as they do provide shelter to some animals along the river banks.

 

**BLUE-GREEN ALGAE** – Blue Green Algae is present in small amounts in all rivers, streams and lakes. The amount of Blue Green Algae found in the Murray-Darling River is very high. The water looks, tastes and smells very bad. If you are in contact with this water, some problems that happen could be death of farm animals, wildlife and pets. Also, if humans drink the water, we can have very bad skin rashes, upset tummies and damage to our body organs. The water cannot be used by farmers for plants and crops and not all fish are unable to live in this water. This is why the Australian Government is spending millions of dollars to make sure there is good water flow in the Murray Darling River.

 

**CARP** – These fish (also known as Alien Fish) were brought into the River and are a pest. As the water in Murray Darling River has become salty and water flow is poor, the native fish have died. Carp on the other hand are very strong fish and can live in any type of water where normal fish would die. Carp do not have teeth to catch and eat other fish however they do fight with younger native fish for food to survive. The only way we can control Carp is to use chemicals or catch them.

 

The Australian Government has spent millions of dollars to restore the Murray Darling River. This program is called **“Living Murray”** and started in 2002**.**  It aims to achieve a healthy working River Murray system for the benefit of all Australians. This includes returning water to the River’s environment.



The **Mouth of the Murray River** is the point where the River empties into the sea. Since 1993, machines have moved sand. This has helped with water flow as the fresh sea water can flow into the river. Otherwise, the River mouth will close – this would cut off the water supply and the river could dry up even more.

The **Living Murray project** will help return the river to look like this





Do you want to see Drought on the Murray River????

We can all stop this from happening.

 

